

*Book Reviews**Functions of the Proteoglycans*

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Edited by David Evered and Julie Whelan

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Proteoglycan research is a rapidly burgeoning field and this CIBA Foundation Symposium text is the first book to comprehensively address the structures and functions of the various families of proteoglycans. Indeed, with the exception of the large cartilage proteoglycan, this is the earliest stage of our understanding at which such a general overview could be undertaken.

This book adopts the familiar, professional, format of the CIBA volumes with each chapter being accompanied by an abstract and references and being followed by an extensive discussion from amongst the participants of the symposium. After the chairman's introduction the non-proteoglycan, hyaluronan, is considered before chapters unfold the state of our understanding of the major families of proteoglycans. There is much debate about both the nomenclature and classification of these families which are discussed in the sequence: large cartilage, small interstitial, cell surface-associated, basement membrane and serine- and glycine-rich proteoglycans.

A most rewarding feature of this book is the high calibre of the discussions, which are tightly structured and thematic. Many of the chapters are followed by discussion sections of equivalent length and the broad participation airs a variety of views and proves a goldmine of otherwise unpublished information and insights. In addition, there are two general discussions, the first upon an epithelial proteoglycan which is a hybrid heparan sulphate/chondroitin sulphate species and the second upon the characterisation and immunolocalisation of glomerular basement membrane proteoglycans. This latter debate raises several interesting aspects of experimental techniques.

This is undoubtedly the most thought-provoking text on proteoglycans, but one is struck by the realisation that it is a faithful account of our understanding in 1986 and that the enormous acceleration in the pace of research consequent upon modern methods of protein sequencing is rapidly enlarging the 'cast' of proteoglycan molecules. Perhaps a second and equally accomplished CIBA Symposium volume on proteoglycans may soon be called for!

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